

EMERGING RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE FEMALE

Rough Draft

by Christine Allen
Simone deBeauvoir Institute
Concordia University
Montreal

Introduction

"O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your mountain?
He who walks blamelessly and does justice;
who thinks the truth in his heart."

Psalm 14¹

At this conference 'emerging religious consciousness' is being discussed in a context in which most of those present are people who have been 'brought up' as Christians. This means that any evaluation of the truths of this phenomena should be done in the light of the teachings of Christ. For those who decide to leave those teachings for something else, it is important to be clear about what one is leaving. For those who decide to remain Christian and who are grounded in certain twentieth century insights about the history of Christianity, it can only be helpful to take a good look at where we are and where we should go. Furthermore, any discussion of contemporary religious consciousness must include reference to the re-valuation of the female. In this paper I will examine the interrelation between emerging religious consciousness, Christianity, and the female. Finally, I will claim that word unity comes about not through the mind but through the heart.

Emerging Religious Consciousness and Christianity

"When the Son of Man comes,
will he find any faith on earth?"
Luke 18:8²

Bernard Lonergan in the "Prolegomena to the Study of The Emerging Religious Consciousness of our Time" has stated that what is unique in our time is the impetus towards unity of all world religions. The conclusion of his paper states: "There is to Christianity an aspiration to universalism, e.g., 1 Tim.2:4. Perhaps the simplest explanation of this universalism would be that (1) the salvation of the Christian is in and through charity and (2) this gift as infra-structure can be the Christian account of religious experience in any and all men. From this basis one may proceed to a general account of emerging religious consciousness, whether universalist, or ecumenist, or 'bottled effervescence', or alienated by secular or ecclesiastical bureaucracy, or seeking the integration of religious awakening with a fuller development of the second enlightenment, or distorted by human obtuseness, frailty, wickedness."³

What needs to be clarified here is the meaning of "universalism", the concrete nature of "charity", and the relation between established Christian churches and Christianity.

Theologians tend to consider 'universal' as a conjoining of minds, not necessarily an agreement in dogma, but none-the-less a common spiritual framework in consciousness. There is a tremendous problem here striking the proper balance between the mind and heart. Kierkegaard struggled with this tendency in Hegel. He had to reaffirm the absolute priority of faith over reason, or what had become known as 'world spirit'. There is, I think a similar tendency in the discussions around emerging religious consciousness. We hear of 'cosmic consciousness', 'universal consciousness', 'the

new consciousness', a 'new world religion', etc. Usually these phrases indicate a new level of thought in which the individuality of various specific religions has vanished. Unity comes about through dissolution of difference. I do not know if Lonergan's view will end up in this Hegelian framework, but there is a tendency. One indication of this is the way in which he views Christianity afterwards, from the point of view of the new consciousness. Lonergan says: "At the present time specific discussion of emerging religious consciousness has to proceed on the basis of some convention. If it is not to be merely generic, it has to adopt the formulation of some particular tradition at least as a temporary or momentary convention... When the choice falls on Christianity etc. . ." ⁴ The view that one can adopt the point of view of a particular religion and specifically of Christianity like one puts on and takes off a coat, 'as a temporary or momentary convention', is just not consistent with a fundamental Christian experience. Christ, in the gospels shows time and again that he calls his disciples. Peter, John, and James are told to leave their fishing and to follow Christ. The view that Christianity is primarily a call to follow Christ is inconsistent with the theologian's claim that one can 'adopt a Christian framework for purposes of discussion and study'. A call is not a temporary or momentary convention. "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me." (Luke 9:23) In an analysis of call, we see the predominance of the heart over head. Consciousness can recognize the call, it cannot create it.

Similarly when it comes to understanding 'charity' we find ourselves in comparable difficulties. There are many ways of loving and of showing love. Lonergan chooses St. Paul's description: "A classical formulation of Christian religious experience may be found in St. Paul's statement that God's love has flooded our innermost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us." (Rom. 5:5) ⁵ It is no doubt true, that most religious people have experienced grace in the form of 'expansion of the heart', 'radiation of the heart', or 'overpowering by the Holy Spirit in the heart'.

This personal experience, however, does not particularly explain Christianity. It is rather a precursor, or in some cases, a preparation for living a Christian life. The true charity of Christians is to be willing to give one's life for others." "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12-13) Christ has demonstrated this by his own life, and he has asked us to do the same thing with ours. "If a man serves me, he must follow me." (John 12:26) Christian charity then cannot be explained by the flooding of the heart with love, but rather of the emptying and consecration of self to God and to our neighbour. As far as I know, this crucifixion of self is uniquely Christian; it is not identical with transcendence of self, or loss of self in cosmic consciousness. It is a specifically Christian martyrdom.

A further problem with this attempt to find a universal religious expression is seen in Lonergan's explanation of religious consciousness. "If consciousness has many meanings, so too will religious consciousness. There follows at once a basic clarification of what might be meant by "emerging religious consciousness", namely, the transition from lesser to greater luminousness, intensity, clarity, fullness."⁶ This 'virtue' of the mind may not be an accurate description of what happens to religious people as they continue along the religious path. The Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of The Cross, a classic Christian text, demonstrates that spiritual development may often be accompanied by lack of luminousness, feelings of aridity, confusion, and emptiness. In the confusion of mind, the heart takes over:

"In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught, without light or guide, save
that which burned in my heart."⁷

On the cross, Christ's cry to the father "Why have you deserted me?" (Mark 15:34) vividly reinforces this aspect of the Christian path. In other words, there is tremendous danger in identifying emergence even of consciousness with clarity. One may precisely emerge in and through darkness. It is difficult for theologians to accept this paradox, but an accurate description of Christianity must include these facts of the spiritual life.

In the area of the relations between established Christian churches and Christianity Charles Davis says: "Participation in a process of communication, not membership of a fixed collective entity, is the basis of Christian identity...Christian identity becomes but one mode of manifestation of a more fundamental religious identity, which we share with people from other religious traditions, as all being participants in a single total history."⁸ The cornerstone of the problem here is 'communication'. Are we speaking of talking and reading and sharing ideas? If so, then that is not the essence of Christ's teachings. He draws us to communication in quite a different way. He draws us to the communication of witness. This means, for Christians, to give one's life for others. For different people this will take different forms, but the fact communicated is the same. The various Christian Churches have tried to interpret this call in different ways historically, and it is clear that some have done better than others. It is also true that the claim that 'there is no salvation outside of the Church' has seen to be limited when it is interpreted as meaning a specific denomination. Simone Weil's witness has at least demonstrated that a person who has not been baptised can be taken over by Christ. She says: "I never wondered whether Jesus was or was not the Incarnation of God; but in fact I was incapable of thinking of him without thinking of him as God."⁹

Does the fact that some are called to Christ outside of an organized religion mean that everyone should 'go beyond', 'transcend', or 'evolve out of' an organized Church within Christianity and then presumably out of Christianity altogether into a new world religion? This is, I think, the crucial question. There are many today who are answering this question in the affirmative. The implication is that to remain a Roman Catholic, or a Presbyterian, or an Anglican at the first stage, and then to remain a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jew, or Hindu at the second stage is to stop evolving. It is even claimed that to stay within a specific organized tradition is to be tied to the ego and its specific personality formulation. I am not claiming that either Lonergan or Davis have made this claim, but

only that others, who have taken their line of reasoning a few steps further have ended up in this position. Without wanting to fall into the trap of a 'slippery slope' accusation, I do want, however, to point out the tremendous danger in such a position. Each person has to make a choice about this. For anyone who has been called to be a Christian it is impossible to go beyond Christ. He becomes for them the Alpha and Omega. This does not mean that unity with peoples of other faiths, or who are outside any organized religion is impossible. Unity comes rather through Christian charity, that is, being willing to give one's life for others no matter who they are or where they come from. Mother Theresa profoundly exemplifies this charity which knows no national, religious, or personal bounds. She says: "Some weeks back I heard there was a family that had not eaten for some days--- a Hindu family---so I took some rice and I went to the family. Before I knew where I was, the mother of the family had divided the rice into two and she took the other half to the next-door neighbours, who happened to be a Moselm family. Then I asked her: "How much will all of you have to share? There are ten of you with that bit of rice." The mother replied: "They have not eaten either." This is greatness."¹⁰ Mother Theresa believes that she is capable of this unity only through Christ. "As each sister is to become a Coworker of Christ in the slums, each ought to understand what God and the Missionaries of Charity expect from her. Let Christ radiate and live his life in her and through her in the slums. Let the poor, seeing her, be drawn to Christ and invite him to enter their homes and lives."¹¹

II

Christianity and the Female

"They did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him".

Mark 16:11

Probably the single most significant claim made by contemporary Christian feminist theologians is that the history of Christianity has progres-

sively devalued the feminine. This devaluation took place in several areas: in the personification of the Divine, in the structure of various churches, and in the description of female models of sanctity. Correspondingly, contemporary thought has tried to reopen these three areas to a fuller participation of the female. In the first one, various attempts have been made to reconsider the androgyny of God. Particularly, God the Father has been reconsidered as God the mother and father in the primary function as Creator and Sustainer of the world. The Holy Spirit has also been interpreted variously as including femaleness. New interest has even been expressed towards Julian of Norwich's description of Christ as our mother, perpetually giving birth to us, feeding us, and correcting us in the spirit.¹² The Holy Trinity is no longer taken to be absolutely masculine over and against a 'female' created humanity. Rosemary Ruether in New Woman New Earth gives a careful analysis of the origins of the devaluation: "In biblical religion and Greek philosophy we find patriarchal reversal myths which are designed to provide the aetiology of this male-dominated, dualistic world-view. In these stories the woman is inferior, posterior, and created by the male or is identified with the bodily world which is created by a spiritual realm that is identified with the male 'essence.'¹³ The reversal referred to is the overthrowing of the Mother Goddess by the worship of Jahweh. Ruether claims that in this radical repression and subsequent devaluation of the mother man was able to free himself from his own mother and to become an autonomous being. With the identification of the mother with nature, it was not surprising that the spirit identified as male became dominant in a dualistic split over nature identified as female. Christianity is being asked by theologians such as Ruether to open itself up to a new vision of human life which gives equal place to women and men through Christ.

The second devaluation referred to above is related to the first. Specifically, the question of women and the ministry or priesthood has been repeatedly raised by Christian feminist theologians. Historically, the overthrow of Goddess worship in its various forms ranging from the worship of the mother goddess, to Isis, to Aphrodite, to Athena, and to

Cebes also resulted in the repression of women priests or priestesses. With specific women in all Christian denominations now beginning to express an inner call to the ministry or priesthood the organized structures of these religions are being asked to adjust their concept of the priesthood to allow for these calls to be realized. Much sophisticated research has been done on the origins of the exclusion of women particularly from the priesthood. In addition, the fact has become increasingly evident, that when women enter the ministry and priesthood they do not become 'as men' but rather bring to the priesthood the full identification of their female heritage. This enriches the priesthood rather than impoverishes it. This is especially true in view of the contemporary situation in which the priesthood needs to be revitalized by the recovery of its original purpose of service. Women, by virtue of their heritage qua woman are perfectly suited to this charism. "Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man cannot to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mat. 20:27-8)

The third area of feminist Christian concern is the recognition that female models of sanctity have been consistently devalued. My own research has focused on two such models: Rebekah in the book of Genesis and Mary, Mother of Jesus. Rebekah is a case and point in the history of the devaluation of the female. The crucial issue is the question of evaluation of her act in encouraging Jacob to deceive Isaac into thinking he was Esau in order to get Isaac's paternal blessing. While the Hebrew's admired her as a Matriarch and St. John Chrysostom saw her as a courageous spirit lead woman, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine virtually ignored her, and the commentators of the 19th century condemned her as a deceitful, lying, scheming mother who was ambitious for her youngest son.¹⁴ While Abraham is being admired for being willing to take Isaac up on the mountain, Rebekah is condemned for deceiving her husband. This condemnation is even more curious when we look at the details of her act. Jacob was afraid to go through with the deceit until Rebekah offered herself in reparation if it should fail. She told him that if Isaac curses Jacob instead of blesses him that she would take the curse upon herself. "If my

father happens to touch me, he will see I am cheating him, and I shall bring down a curse on myself instead of a blessing." But his mother answered him, "On me be the curse, my son!" (Gen. 27:12-14) This is the first time in the Bible that anyone offered themselves for another person. In this Rebekah could be seen as the precursor of Christ.

We have also seen Mary, Mother of Jesus devalued until she appears is stereotype as a passive young girl smiling peacefully at a baby on Christmas cards. This devaluation has corresponded to the general devaluation of the female in the last two centuries. It was through Kierkegaard's insight that I first decided to explore what could be called the 'dread of Mary'.¹⁵ Specifically, this approach attempts to uncover the inner spiritual dimension of her call, as reported in the various gospel stories. It does not attempt to explain away Biblical passages through a systematic study of the style, hermeneutics, or Hebrew heritage. It is, rather an existential approach in which the dread is grounded in her reported spiritual trials. These trials include silence during the period of pregnancy when she was in danger of being stoned to death, travelling a long distance just near the termination of pregnancy, the full weight of the murder of the innocents, the loss of her child for several days, and witnessing the eventual torture and murder of her son. When Mary is viewed in terms of the inner dynamics of her spirituality, she has a great deal to teach us. "A sword will pierce your own soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." (Luke 2:35) Mary's spirituality is profoundly active. It took tremendous effort to follow Christ before he was fully recognized as the Savior. Mary knew that truth even then was not primarily in the mind for she "stored up all these things in her heart." (Luke 2:52) The passive identification of her role followed from a concern with external models, instead of with interior spirituality.

Still a third religious model which is being reconsidered today is that of Mary Magdeline. Rosemary Ruether claims: "The Mary who represents the Church, the liberated humanity, may, rather, be the repressed and defamed Mary of the Christian tradition, Mary Magdeline, friend and dis-

ciple of Jesus, the first witness of the resurrection, the revealer of the Christian Good News."¹⁶ The fact that Christ first appeared to a woman, whose profession had been prostitution is often overlooked. "Having risen in the morning on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary of Magdala... She then went to those who had been his companions, and who were mourning and in tears, and told them. But they did not believe her when they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him... Lastly, he showed himself to the eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen." (Mark 16: 9-16) Not only did Christ not condemn Mary Magdeline but he entrusted her with the world's most precious gift, the Alleluia of his triumph over death. Christianity today as then, must open itself to the fullness of the female embracing her in her extensive devaluation.

Any consideration of contemporary attitudes towards the relation between Christianity and the female must take into consideration specific forms of female witness to Christ in the 20th century. Names like Thérèse of Liseaux, Edith Stein, Raissa Maritain, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Mother Theresa, come readily to mind. In each of these women we find something original in their vocation, something which combines a response to follow Christ with consciousness of their vocation as a woman and in the specific context of twentieth century life. Thérèse of Liseaux demonstrated the effacacy of contemplative prayer in the world outside the cloister; Edith Stein, Husserl's most brilliant student, showed that the fulfillment of philosophy lay in the cross through her own witness as victim of a concentration camp; Raissa Maritain, another philosopher, demonstrated the possibility of profound love with a celibate marriage; Dorothy Day has through journalism brought the realities of a living pacifism and the plight of the afflicted in New York City into the consciousness of modern America; Simone Weil through a life of asceticism and devotion to truth demonstrated that Christ could take over a life outside of any established Christian tradition; Mother Theresa has shown that women can enter into the most devastating slums and slowly begin to bring about a transformation of that

life by living along side and sharing in the lives of the 'poorest of the poor'; and the Benedictine Contemplative Nuns of Regina Laudis Abbey in Bethlehem, Connecticut have shown that women are able to witness through creating Christian communities ranging from completely self-sufficient organic farming, to lawyers, to teachers, to healers, to young married couples, and to caring for the sick. These lay communities have all been created and sustained from behind the cloister wall. The monastery itself does all its own farming and expects its members to have a profession before entering which the nuns must keep up and turn over to the community. The Abbess, for example, is a medical surgeon.

The examples mentioned above, are all primarily examples of contemporary witness, not of theology, although thought plays an important role in each and every one. For example, Simone Weil said: "Christ likes us to prefer truth to him, because, before being Christ, he is truth. If one turns aside from him to go toward the truth, one will not go far before falling into his arms."¹⁷ The truth of those who follow Christ is not primarily a truth of philosophy or of theories of evolution, it is a truth of the heart. Malcolm Muggeridge described an incident with Mother Theresa as follows: "Truth, in her shining version, can never be repetitive or banal, as its poor moralizing or pedantic image so often is. It is still remembered in Canada how, appearing in a TV programme with Jacques Monod and Jean Vanier, she sat with her head seemingly bowed in prayer while the famous French molecular biologist and Nobel prize winner animadverted upon how the whole future destiny of the human race is inexorably locked up in our genes. When pressed by the compère for her views, she simply lifted up her head and remarked: 'I believe in love and compassion', then resumed her devotions."¹⁸ Witness to Christ, as it has been lived through contemporary women overcomes the devaluation of the female which we have seen in the discussions of the female in other areas of Christianity. The theories of devaluation become pale in comparison with living women who are transformed through Christ in their daily lives and who demonstrate in the flesh the absolute equality of woman and her capacity to become 'other Christs' in the world.

Emerging Religious Consciousness and the Female

"And then many will fall away"

Mat. 24:11

Three very different, but interconnected theologies have recently evolved among women who were 'brought up' in the Hebrew or Christian tradition. The first is found in Rosemary Ruether, the second in Mary Daly, and the third in the Wicca movement. In all three there is a progressive movement away from traditional Christianity. They fulfill the criteria set forth by Lonergan as being examples of emerging religious consciousness, and therefore they must be carefully considered in the present discussion.

Rosemary Ruether has been part of the movement in Christianity called 'liberation theology'. This movement seeks to divest Christianity from its identification with upper class authoritarian power and instead associate it with the needs of the masses of the poor, oppressed, or minority groups. Christ becomes their symbol of a man who divested himself of his power by emptying himself on the cross. In Liberation Theology Ruether first struggles with these ideas and gives them an admirable force and power. In addition, she introduces a theme which later comes to dominate her thought: the problem of dualism between the spirit and flesh and its relation to Christianity. This dualism has led to two 'evils' namely the tendency to escape from the flesh by other worldliness, or to seek to crush it through domination and exploitation. Because women have become identified with the flesh both personally and through her identification with 'mother earth', these dualisms ended up in her ultimate devaluation. Ruether tries to redress this balance. "We seek to become authentic cocreators with God, upon whose works God can look and declare, at last, that it is indeed "very good". We seek to become neither world-exploiters, nor world fleers, but cultivators of the garden."¹⁹ There is no doubt that this vision is a positive one and does seek to bring about a desperately needed reorientation in our attitude towards the earth, towards the female, and the gifts of creation.

Ruether's latest book New Woman New Earth, goes much further. Her preoccupation with the evils that a theological dualism has brought about has led her into making the fatal error of rejecting dualism altogether. Instead of questioning the identification of dualism with groups or universal structures which in my mind is what brought about the destructiveness in its application, she decides to get rid of dualism. One of the consequences of her choice is to deny the divinity of God altogether. "Our final mandate is to redeem our sister, the earth, from her bondage to destruction recognizing her as our partner in the creation of that new world where all things can be "very good". Thus the exorcism of the demonic spirit of sexism in the Church touches off a revolution which must transform all the relations of alienation and domination---between self and body, between leaders and community, between persons and person, between social groups, between Church and world, between humanity and nature, finally our model of God in relation to creation."²⁰ Ruether's decision to fight the problems of the misapplication of dualism in the world by surgically removing all dualism undermine the basic teachings of Christ, and seems to be leading her eventually out of Christianity altogether. Christ will become little more than an historical model of a nice man who said things about liberation. The transcendence of Christ and his contemporary work in transforming individuals through grace will be left aside and replaced by a concept of religion as something which rises up out of people in community and expresses its aspirations, something which Christianity surely does, but not what it is. Ruether had already given evidence of this direction in her description of immortality as a desire in the self rather than a promise that death has been conquered by his resurrection. She says: "Perhaps this also demands a letting-go of that self-infinetizing view of the self that culminates in the wish for personal immortality. One accepts the fact that it is the whole, not the individual, which is that infinite out of whose "womb" we arise at birth and into whose womb we are content to return to at death."²¹ While Ruether remembers the resurrection she forgets the ascension. It is hard to see how she can continue to consider herself a follower of Christ when she rejects so much of the central core of his

teaching. She has moved out of Christianity, even if she admires Christ as a teacher in his concern with the oppressed, and into a kind of modern humanism.

Mary Daly has openly declared her fissure with Christianity in her major work Beyond God the Father. In contrast with Ruether who admires Christ, Daly claims: "'Jesus was a limited human being', an idol 'limiting God', a model to be transvalued and replaced by the search for 'Being in all persons.'"²² Because she redefines original sin to be sexism, it obviously follows that Christ as male cannot be savior. It further follows that woman can be the savior. "Seen from this perspective the Anti Christ and the Second Coming of women are synonomous. This Second Coming is not a return to Christ but a new arrival of female presence, once strong and powerful, but enchained since the dawn of patriarchy. Only this arrival can liberate the memory of Jesus from enchainment to the role of 'man-kinds most illustrious scapegoat.'"²³ Daly seeks to overturn the devaluation of the female by an inversion of the traditional valuation in which males become devalued and females overvalued. In contrast to Ruether, who has a balanced vision of the community of all persons as well as a deep concern to find a respect and unity between Christians and Jews, blacks and whites, and women and men, Daly wants to create a bonding primarily of women who would open themselves later to others who shared this new consciousness of the cosmic 'covenant of sisterhood'.²⁴ This new community will not be organized along the lines of churches. "To affirm that sisterhood is Antichurch is not to speak on the level of denominational quarrels but on the level of a profound struggle within the human psyche trying to free itself from destructive social forces."²⁵

It is clear that Daly's theological vision has arisen out of a female consciousness and is deeply based on the need to redress the devaluation of the female which has been a part of the history of Judaism and Christianity. Her decision, in the light of this devaluation, is not to reject the dualism, as Ruether has done, but to invert it. Women become the source of good, men of evil. She loves God and still maintains a certain amount of transcendence through a theology of the 'verb' "Why indeed must "God"

be a noun? Why not a verb--the most active and dynamic of all?...The anthropomorphic symbols for God may be intended to convey personality, but they fail to convey that God is Be-ing. Women who are experiencing the shock of non-being and the surge of self-affirmation against this are inclined to perceive transcendence as the Verb in which we participate---live, move, and have our being."²⁶

Daly's vision of God as healer does strike a chord in many contemporary women. She relates to their need to develop self love and a strong ego in the midst of a world which has repeatedly undermined their sense of self worth. She "issues a very particular call to women to give birth to themselves, to hear their own words, to reach out to a God 'whose presence is a source of healing', a transforming power that makes all things new."²⁷ This feminist vision is important in a world which is becoming increasingly materialistic and opposed to all things spiritual. However, as we follow Daly's theology to the end of its vision, this call begins to appear troublesome. How does a person become able to overcome the self, once this ego is established? Does pride in the self become the ultimate goal of life? I once asked Daly about this at an American Academy of Religion conference (Chicago, 1976) and she answered that women do not have this problem. This answer is not very satisfying, to say the least. From the Christian perspective it is Christ who brings humility by the affects of grace in the heart, by making his home in the heart, so that the self no longer lives but Christ lives in the self. "Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." (Mat. 11:30) Humility is not identical to servility. It is a crown of the spiritual life. Mother Theresa comments: "It is so very easy to be proud and harsh and selfish, so easy; but we have been created for greater things."²⁸

This aspect of pride in the self has become a central feature of the Wicca movement, which is probably the first new religion which has emerged out of the women's movement. This religion worships the Goddess, a female force which existed in various pre-patriarchal religions. One description of a Wicca liturgy is the following: "It is the night of the full moon.

Nine women stand in a circle, on a rocky hill above the city. The western sky is rosy with the sun setting...A young woman raises a steel knife and cries out, a wail echoed by the others as they begin the dance. They circle widely around a cauldron of smoldering herbs, feeling the power rise within them until they unite in exstacy. The priestess cries again, and all drop to the earth, exhausted, but filled with an overwhelming sense of peace. The woman pours out a cup of wine onto the earth, refills it and raises it high. "Hail Tana, Mother of Mothers! she cries. "Awaken from Your long sleep, and return to Your children again."²⁹ It is important to recognize the far reaching implications of the Wicca movement. There is no doubt that it is a part of the new emerging religious consciousness. Small groups, which call themselves covens are springing up all over the United States. They involve a wide variety of women and men including several theologians who had previously been identified with Christian or Hebrew traditions. The woman Starhawk who wrote the above description claims: "I see the next few years as being crucial in the transformation of our culture away from the patriarchal death cults and toward the love of life, of nature, of the Female principle...The long sleep of Mother Goddess is ended."³⁰

The same interest in woman's identification with nature that we found in Ruether is present here. "The Craft is earth religion, and our basic orientation is to the earth, to life, to nature. There is no dichotomy between spirit and flesh, no split between Godhead and the world. The Goddess is manifest in the world; She brings life into being, is nature, is flesh. Union is not sought outside the world in some Heavenly sphere or through dissolution of the self into the Void beyond the senses. Spiritual union is found in life, within nature, passion, sensuality---through being fully human, fully one's self."³¹ The religion is clearly a kind of pantheism which its members recognize and accept. In this it differs significantly from Ruether's emphasis on human community and the desirability of creating small urban neighbourhoods and communities. The dualism of spirit and flesh, however, is rejected in both theologies. For Ruether, love should be transformed into community action while for the Wicca, it is ultimately expressed in sensuality. "Most of all, the Craft values love. The Goddess'

only law is "Love unto all beings". But the love we value is not the airy flowerpower of the hippies or the formless, abstracted agape of the early Christians. It is passionate, sensual, personal love; eros; falling-in-love, mother-child love, the love of one unique human being for other individuals, with all their personal traits and idiosyncrasies."³² If for a moment we can return to Lonergan's desire to use the feeling of love in the heart as a common basis for religion, it is hard to see how Wicca could be combined with Christianity in a common view of world religions. While it is true that the devaluation of woman also resulted in the devaluation of sensual love within historical Christianity, the deification of sensual love does not seem to be a particularly satisfying way to solve the problem. The reintroduction of sexual love as an experience of the divine and and its subsequent sacramental dimension within marriage does begin to redress the balance. It has also been the experience of many centuries that in the long run free expression of sensual love by itself can do more to destroy community than to build it up. Christian love ultimately means being able to deny the self for others.

The Wicca movement does not ask for denial of self. "The Craft values independence, personal strength, Self--not petty selfishness but that deep core of strength within that makes us each a unique child of the GoddessWhen Self is valued--in ourselves--we can see that Self is everywhere."³³ In a study of goddess worship Carol Christ discovered that some members of this religion believe only in the immanence of this force in their own lives while others believed in a transcendence aspect to the force as well. However, in all cases, the goal seems to be self affirmation. "At the simplest and most basic level, the symbol of Goddess is an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power."³⁴ She exalts this dimension of the new religion. "As women struggle to create a new culture in which women's power, bodies, will and bonds are celebrated, the symbol of the Goddess reemerges, speaks to the deep mind, enables the final exorcism of the patriarchal policeman, and shines forth the image of the beauty, strength, and power of women."³⁵ Again, I find it difficult to accept this termination point of the new religion. Surely

one of the consistent lessons of history has been the fact that power when it is worshipped for its own sake leads to corruption. Women are beginning to appear destined to go through the same mistakes as the men they are trying to avoid. Mary in the magnificent declares: "(The Almighty) has shown the power of his arm and routed the proud of heart." (Luke 1:51) Absolute power should only be in the hands of God, human power is given by God and should be used for God not for the self. Just because traditional religions have often forgotten this and abused power for themselves in various circumstances, it does not mean that women should form new religions which will do the same thing. The problem is how to be continuously renewed by God so that the power one has will not become corrupted, but rather turned over, emptied out, for God and our neighbour.

It is tempting to recall the time when Moses won freedom from Pharaoh by having a contest between Gods. After setting up a few concrete situations to be prayed about, like an old woman who is starving to death, a broken family which needs to be reconciled, a community torn with violent strife, an alcoholic bent on self destruction and so forth, judging by the results, we could conclude which God is the true God. We could ask Rosemary Ruether to pray to the human community, Mary Daly to pray to Be-ing, a member of Wicca to pray to the force of the Goddess in the self, and Mother Theresa to pray to Christ and The Blessed Virgin. However, Jesus has said: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test." (Mat. 4:7) So this temptation must reluctantly be abandoned.

If we look again at Lonergan's criteria for emerging religious consciousness we find that all three of the above theories qualify. He is interested in consciousness in which "settled religious belief or practice has been modified in some unexpected manner or measure."³⁶ Ruether, Daly, and the Wicca all clearly modify in unexpected ways the Christian or Judaic tradition they emerged from.

They also fulfill the second requirement that: "a change in religious attitudes can be authentic only if it includes some inward ground for commitment."³⁷ Does this mean, then that any attempt of Lonergan to find a common denominator of emerging religious consciousness would involve the

inclusion of these three theories? It is difficult to see how he could avoid including them if they fulfill his criteria, and yet it is equally difficult to see how he could find a common denominator either. When he offers the suggestion of adopting 'flooding of the heart with love' as the common ground we run into further difficulties, for as I have shown love has rather different meanings for Ruether, Daly and the Wicca adherents. The problem becomes even more drastic when the Christian concept of love as denial of self or willingness to give one's life for one's neighbour is included. It seems as though the intellectual desire for unity of consciousness is just not possible without sacrificing the very essence of the different religious visions.

Women have always placed a priority on love and on the heart. In the revaluation of the female this must not be lost. It is being sacrificed, however, by the very women who should be bearing witness to it. Instead of the heart becoming the ground of their being, the reflective mind, the mystic mind, or the body is taking over. Absolute confidence is being placed in the powers of reason, the upsurge of self-will, or in sensuality instead of in the call in the heart to follow Christ. Therefore, in the revaluation of the female it is not the orientation of the female which must be changed, but rather the valuation placed upon that orientation. It is through the heart that unity will come.

Conclusion

"When I am lifted up from the earth,
I shall draw all men to myself."

John 12:32

At the beginning of the paper we stated Lonergan's claim that 'what is unique in our time is the impetus towards unity of all world religions.' It is well known that wars, crusades, and coldness of heart has been for centuries a byproduct of the conflicting theologies found in different religions. It is also clear that unity of all persons was Christ's final

prayer: "May they all be one." (John 17:21) The impetus towards unity is without doubt a great good. We still need to be clear, however, on what brings about this unity. It is my contention that the desire for a single world theology or new cosmic religion will not achieve this goal. In fact, it may hinder it by placing too much emphasis on the mind and on the powers of consciousness to develop its own visions. We delight in the mind as well we should, for it is without doubt one of the most precious gifts of the creator. However, it is not the ultimate gift. As St. Paul has seen, of all the gifts it is love that does not end. And the home of love is the heart, the mature heart that dies for its neighbours. Christ could only 'draw all persons to himself' after he was lifted up from the earth. He could only be lifted up after he died. If we are Christians, then we must follow this path. Unity will come through this way of love, through giving our lives for our neighbours. Christ daily shows us the way to this unity.

"I am the good shephard; ...
and I lay down my life for my sheep.
And there are other sheep I have
that are not of this fold,
and these I have to lead as well.
They too will listen to my voice,
and there will be only one flock,
and one shephard."

John 10:16-17

FOOTNOTES

1. Psalm 14. A Short Breviary (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1962), 226-7.
2. All further biblical references will be taken from The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971).
3. Bernard Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of The Emerging Religious Consciousness of our Time", unpublished essay, 19-20.
4. Ibid., p. 19.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 5.
7. St. John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul, trans. E. Allison Peers, (Garden City: Image Books, 1959), p. 34.
8. Charles Davis, Abstract to "Our New Religious Identity" unpublished.
9. Simone Weil, The Simone Weil Reader, ed. George A. Panichas, (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1977), p. 16.
10. Mother Theresa, A Gift for God, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge (London: Collins, 1975), p. 59.
11. Ibid., p. 36.
12. Christine Allen, "Christ our Mother in Julian of Norwich" presented at American Academy of Religion Conference, San Francisco, 1977.
13. Rosemary Ruether, New Woman New Earth, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 15.
14. Christine Allen, "Who was Rebekah?" first version published in Women and Religion II, Rita Gross, ed. Missoula, Montana: Scholars' Press, 1977. second version to be published in _____ by Semaia Supplements ed. Martin Buss (1978).
15. Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, ed. W. Lowrie, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 75.
16. Ruether, New Woman New Earth, p. 59.

17. Weil, p. 16.
18. Muggeridge, pp. 3-4.
19. Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology (Toronto: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 22.
20. Ruether, New Woman New Earth, p. 83.
21. Ibid., p. 211.
22. Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) p. 69, 71.
23. Ibid., p. 96.
24. Rosemary Ruether also points out that Daly's theology is primarily of interest to white, middle class women in "White Feminism and Black Liberation", New Woman New Earth, p. 121.
25. Daly, p. 138.
26. Ibid., pp. 33-4.
27. Christine Garside Allen, "Self-creation and loss of self: Mary Daly and St. Theresa of Avila," Studies in Religion, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1967, p. 72.
28. Mother Theresa, p. 53.
29. Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture" (available through The Feminist Wicca, 442 Lincoln Blvd., Venice, Calif. 1976), p. 2-3.
30. Ibid., p. 20-21.
31. Ibid., p. 10.
32. Ibid., p. 12.
33. Ibid., p. 11.
34. Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess", (given at American Academy of Religion Conference, San Francisco, 1978), p. 6. Also available from author, Department of Religion, San Jose State University.
35. Ibid., p. 17.

36. Lonergan, p. 2.

37. Ibid.